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Report of the Committee on Legal Aid

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REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AID

By DeWitt Williams of Seattle

[Mr. DeWitt Williams supplemented the report of the Committee on Legal Aid published in the *Washington State Bar News*, Vol. X., p. 12, by the following remarks]

It is a great privilege for the Committee on Legal Aid to be given an opportunity to refer to its report and to its program at this meeting particularly, as you will note, if you have read it, as we are looking forward in the coming year to a program of action which depends for its success upon the participation and aid of the local bar associations. The legal aid work, perhaps of all our work, is the one which must be most tailor made to the situation in each community.

Legal aid deals with the very fundamental right of people to have the aid of the law and of lawyers regardless of their ability to pay. I am glad that our report follows so closely after the noon meeting, because I wish to remind you that if the program which was so well praised this noon is one hundred per cent successful we would become the friend and confidant of all of the public. If they do not feel the law is their friend, and if they do not want to resort to it, there will be, unless we do something about it, an iron curtain of feeling in the minds of many people, and certainly of most indigent people, that the law is only for those who can pay for it. It is the business of legal aid to remove that iron curtain. We want to remove it from all parts of the state, whether it be in the smaller communities or the larger communities.

I may say quite frankly that the committee has found considerable apathy toward the legal aid movement in most directions. We think that apathy springs from a misconception of the situation because in these more prosperous times there is not a clamor for aid. There is a belief that the need does not exist.

As a matter of fact, experience has shown that a bar association or a local group of lawyers never knows whether there is a real need, recognition of which need is a first requirement for removing this iron curtain, until there is an established place where people may go as a matter of right. This is so whether the program is implemented by a director and offices as we have in Seattle—a situation in which I have worked for over 15 years in one capacity or another—or whether it is an office maintained simply for the proper distribution of the work

among the lawyers in a smaller community. There must be a place known to the people of the community, where they can go as a matter of right, without embarrassment, and where their needs will be taken care of.

With respect to our program as outlined in our report, we intend to ask each of the local bar associations—and we have asked to proceed in that way because, as I have said, it is a local problem—to answer certain questions which will give us a basis for determining possible action in each particular community, and then we will submit to you a suggested plan of action.

I urge that when you are called upon in your local groups to aid this program through the questionnaire, and through the implementing of a statewide program tailored to the needs of the individual community, you give your support and your cooperation whole-heartedly to the end that next year we will have more tangible progress to report.

REPORT OF THE STATUTE LAW COMMITTEE

By Ben C. Grosscup of Seattle

Mr. Ben C. Grosscup, Chairman of the Statute Law Committee, introduced the staff of his committee, Messrs. Richard O. White, Ellis I. Collins, and Lowell McDonald. He reviewed the work of his committee during the past year and the budgetary requirement of the committee for the coming legislative biennium. He indicated that the powers and duties of the Statute Law Committee encompass the powers and duties which would normally be committed to a law revision committee. Mr. Grosscup predicted restoration of the restorable portions of the Revised Code of Washington to the text enacted by the legislature by the closing of the 1959 legislative session.

REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE CODE

By Judge Harry Ellsworth Foster of Olympia

The Honorable Harry Ellsworth Foster, Judge of the Supreme Court and Chairman of the Advisory Committee on the Code, supplemented the report of that committee published in the *Washington State Bar News*, Vol. X, pp. 10-11 and recommended that no substantive law revision be undertaken until the work is completed conforming the Revised Code of Washington to the statutes enacted by the legislature. The confusion resulting from the continued supplementation of the